



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
20250-0100

May 13, 2003

Dear USDA Employees:

One year ago, President Bush signed into law the *Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002*. The law not only made sweeping changes in many USDA programs, but created new ones as well. Our team at USDA has worked hard to implement the new farm law efficiently and responsibly to best help our producers and other program participants receive their intended benefits. On behalf of President Bush, as we mark this one-year anniversary, thank you for your dedication, persistence and professionalism in successfully delivering the programs.

Because of your efforts, our progress in the first year of this seven-year legislation is impressive. We conducted numerous analyses, wrote many regulations, developed software and websites, and facilitated the sign-up of thousands of participants. As a result, among many other accomplishments, we have:

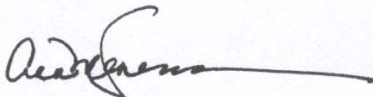
- Implemented all key commodity program provisions quickly and efficiently;
- Provided more than \$8 billion in program payments for agricultural producers;
- Released more than \$1.8 billion for conservation assistance on working lands, including funding for Farm Bill and appropriated programs;
- Implemented revisions to the Conservation Reserve Program with general sign-up in process between May 5 and May 30, 2003;
- Provided an additional \$10 million for the Market Access Program and other additional funds for market-development activities;
- Implemented the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program, announcing \$2 million in funding;
- Launched the new McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program;
- Implemented a successful and popular pilot program to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in schools;

- Provided access to Food Stamp Program benefits for newly qualified legal immigrants;
- Awarded hundreds of millions of dollars in Rural Development assistance, including value-added grants, and water and waste disposal funds;
- Published final regulations and solicitation of applications for an anticipated \$1.4 billion in rural broadband loans and loan guarantees;
- Implemented the Senior Scientific Research Service, which allows USDA to attract and retain the highest-caliber scientists;
- Implemented the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program and announced the availability of \$23 million in grants;
- Implemented the Biomass Research and Development Program and announced the availability of \$21 million in grants;
- Made key revisions to the Bioenergy Program, which provides up to \$115.5 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2003 and up to \$150 million over the next three fiscal years;
- Held 11 sessions across the country and in Puerto Rico to reach out to the full spectrum of USDA customers; and
- Vernon Parker became USDA's first Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, as authorized under the Farm Bill.

These achievements are remarkable. But our work is not done. Many programs have yet to be fully implemented, and your diligence and hard work will continue to be needed and appreciated as we move forward.

Thank you for going the extra mile to deliver programs and resources to farm and ranch families across the country as well as to the many program participants who rely on USDA programs. I am incredibly proud of everyone on our USDA team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Veneman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ann M. Veneman